

May 23, 2005

400,000 Embryos Available? Hardly!

Most Recent Study - Commissioned by IVF Clinics Themselves - Finds Few Embryos Available for Research

Dear Colleague:

You received a Dear Colleague letter dated May 20, 2005, from Reps. DeGette and Castle claiming the following regarding the 400,000 human embryos presently frozen in *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) clinics:

*“Even though many of these IVF embryos were originally reserved for possible future pregnancy, IVF researchers have indicated that **most** (emphasis added) of these embryos will not be used by couples and will eventually be discarded or frozen.”*

Unfortunately, **the above statement is incorrect**. A definitive study on this issue conducted by the RAND Corporation, and paid for by The Society of Assisted Reproductive Medicine (SART, an association of *In Vitro* Fertilization [IVF] clinics) found something very different. **RAND found that over 90% of the nearly 400,000 frozen embryos are waiting to be used by their parents or donated to other couples for adoption.** The RAND study was subjected to peer review and was published in 2003 in the journal, *Fertility and Sterility*.

With regard to the earlier estimates – as quoted in the DeGette/Castle Dear Colleague – RAND said “these estimates [were] accurate.”

The non-partisan RAND Corporation - not IVF researchers – did find that:

- In 2003 there were nearly 400,000 embryos stored in over 340 IVF clinics in the U.S.
- Over 90% of these embryos are waiting to be used by their parents or donated to other couples for adoption.
- **Only 2.8% were designated for research** and 2.2% were designated for destruction.

To suggest to Members that “most” are available for research is simply incorrect. I hope you find these facts helpful. If you would like a copy of the RAND study, please call my office (x53671) and my staff will be more than willing to send you a copy.

Sincerely,
/s/

Dave Weldon, M.D.
Member of Congress